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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 001091

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: WITHOUT SYLLAH, MAJORITY PARTY IS STRONG AND UNITED

REF: A) CONAKRY 1066

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Majority party members report that the dismissal of Mamadou Syllah as honorary president of the PUP was necessary in order to ensure party unity. With him gone, contacts say the party is stronger than ever. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Poloff met separately with two senior members of the ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) on September ¶26. At PUP headquarters, poloff spoke with Sekou Konate, Secretary General of the party and head of its executive

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board. Konate is a close friend of Mamadou Syllah,s and represents one side of the internal debate within the PUP. At the National Assembly, poloff met with Aliou Banire Diallo, President of the PUP Parliamentary Group within the National Assembly and a member of the party,s executive board. Diallo represents the other side of the PUP, which has been more critical of Syllah,s participation in the party. Joining Diallo in the meeting was Cheick Tidiane Traore, the youngest deputy to the National Assembly.

PUP ALIVE AND WELL

¶3. (SBU) Sekou Konate said the PUP,s recent upcountry trip was a "surprising success.⁸ Organized by Konate, along with Mamadou Syllah, the trip was intended to mobilize the party and jumpstart election preparations. Konate confided that he expected to find the &PUP dead in the interior,⁸ but instead found warm welcomes nearly everywhere. In particular, he noted that the group was well-received in N,Zerekore, Kankan, Mamou, Labe and Kindia. With respect to Labe, Konate said that opposition parties warned the PUP to stay away from the region, which is reportedly a strong support base for key opposition parties. However, the meeting in Labe went well and there were no disturbances, Konate said. Konate added that party members conveyed a clear message of resounding support throughout the country. &We are a party united,⁸ he said.

KOUYATE IS IGNORING US

¶4. (C) Turning to relations with the Kouyate government, Konate expressed frustration. He said that the PUP fully supports Lansana Kouyate as prime minister because he was designated by President Lansana Conte according to specific provisions within the constitution. However, Konate said that Kouyate completely ignores the PUP and refuses to hold consultations. In the past, he added, previous prime ministers would always hold private consultations with the PUP in deference to their role as the majority party of

government. Konate said that the PUP is invited to all meetings, but it is not enough. &We should not be informed at the same time as all the other parties,8 he said. &As the majority elected party, we should be consulted in private before decisions are made.8

NO HARD FEELINGS

¶5. (C) A close friend of Mamadou Syllah, Konate commented on President Conte,s recent decision to remove Syllah as the honorary president of the PUP (reftel). He said that Syllah is someone who has truly helped the country and that is why Conte gave him the honorific title. However, Konate said that Syllah wanted to play a more prominent role within the party and had requested that he be designated vice president, a position that does not currently exist under the party,s bylaws. According to Konate, Conte saw this as a threat to his own power and "was smart enough8 to ask Syllah to step down. Konate added that Syllah and Conte are still close friends and that there are no hard feelings between them over the decision, pointing out that Konate, Syllah and Conte had all lunched together privately just the day before.

¶6. (C) Konate said that in large part, Conte,s decision was simply strategic. Disagreements over Syllah,s role were dividing the party and according to Konate, the President felt that it was more important for the party to be united. Konate added that &if the PUP splits, this country will be burning. The PUP has an interest in maintaining peace because we have built it for the last 26 years,8 he said.

FOR UNITY, WE PROVOKED ACTION

CONAKRY 00001091 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) The meeting with Aliou Banire Diallo revealed a slightly different version of events. According to Diallo, Syllah was hungry for power and miscalculated his influence. Internal debates within the PUP over recent months were becoming increasingly unproductive and threatened to divide the party completely, Diallo said. As a result, Diallo, along with Aboubacar Sompore, President of the National Assembly, said they made a calculated political move by publishing an intentionally provocative communique in which party members decried Syllah,s efforts to gather more power. Diallo said they did this in order to force action because they feared that the party would become increasingly divided over the issue just when it needed to be unified for elections.

¶8. (C) According to Diallo, the tactic worked because shortly thereafter, President Conte dismissed Syllah. Furthermore, the party held a regular meeting after the dismissal and everyone was present with no evidence of hard feelings, Diallo said. He added &no-one was victorious, it was ultimately the party that won and it is only with unity that we can ultimately win the elections.8

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) Konate,s glowing report of the PUP mission upcountry is in direct contrast to local media reports as well as information from various contacts. While the PUP may have received a warmer reception than anticipated, credible sources report that Mamadou Syllah was not well-received, and in some cases, even booed (reftel).

¶10. (C) Party representatives seemed eager to convey the message that the PUP is strong and united. Konate and Diallo communicated with each other prior to poloff,s meetings so

that each knew the other was meeting privately with the Embassy. The PUP appears to be gearing up for elections and seems aware that they likely have a tough campaign ahead of them. Removing Mamadou Syllah may help the party refocus its energies on its more pressing agenda. END COMMENT.
CARTER